



Reintegration



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The Goal

The goal is that every reunion would be a “gentle merger” and not a “head-on collision”



Reality



= Elation

Expectation

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Expectation



= Disappointment

Reality

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Expectation



Reality



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Stages of Reunion



1. Anticipation of the Homecoming
2. Homecoming
3. Renegotiation and Reintegration



Anticipation of the Reunion

(1 of 3)

Before arrival

Physical frenzy of preparation

Emotional rush of joy and relief

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Anticipation of the Reunion

(2 of 3)

- Apprehensions of service member/family
 - ***“How have the kids grown and changed?”***
 - ***“How will authority be reestablished?”***
 - ***“Has my spouse become too independent?”***
 - ***“Where do I fit now that I’m back?”***
 - ***“Will I have any personal time?”***
 - **Subject to the length of the separation**

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Anticipation of the Reunion

(3 of 3)

- Apprehensions – continued
 - ***What do I do with the close relationships that have developed during mobilization?***
 - ***The challenge of adjusting to different time schedules.***
 - ***What about broken promises? (Write every day, send gifts, missed phone calls, etc.)***
 - ***Getting to know one another again!***

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The Homecoming



- **Family exhaustion**
- **Attention needed**
- **Very emotional**
- **Tears and long conversations**
- **Physical recovery of the service member**
- **Lower your expectations for your service member**
- **The service member still has unit responsibilities**



Common Coping Strategies



- Communicate
- Roles may have changed
- Find out what new skills everyone has learned
- Arrange quiet time
- Stay positive
- Don't expect old problems to have gone away



Handle Change With Tolerance and Flexibility



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Post-Deployment Emotions



Children's Emotions (Age):

- May not know you when held (<1)
- Hide or slow to approach (1-3)
- Guilt or scared about your absence (3-5)
- Demand time and attention (6-12)
- Moody or act disinterested (>13)
- Divided loyalties and fear (All ages)?



Children's Issues



- Talk with your kids about their fears and anger
- Keep the kids close initially
- Some kids may feel a distance from the returning parent
- Some may cling to the returning parent
- Jealousy is common



Children's Issues



- Expect kids to change emotionally and physically
- Don't alter new discipline routine right away
- Make sure your kids feel loved and needed



The Reunion Process for Children

(1 of 3)



- “Perfect Pictures”
- Children adapt rapidly to new situations
- Each child will react differently

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The Reunion Process for Children



(2 of 3)

- Children have the same confusing feeling as adults
- They're unsure what to expect from the returning
- Change is just as stressful for children as it is for

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The Reunion Process for Children

(3 of 3)



- This is not the same child the soldier left
- There will be a readjustment period
- Unacceptable behavior

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The Reunion Process for Returning Mothers

- Unexpected reactions from children
- A baby can't be cuddled too much
- Preschoolers
- Older children and adolescents



The Reunion Process for New Fathers



- A whole new family
- Baby comes first
- Other children may need help with the transition
- There may be jealousy



The Reunion Process for Single Parents



- Unique concerns
- Strategies for coping
 - Focus on communication
 - Stay involved during the transition
 - Let the soldier know the rules of your home
 - Let the child express feelings of the “new relationship”

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Tips for the Home Team



- Expect changes in your spouse/loved one
- Be patient
- Give your soldier time to adjust to changes at home
- Don't get defensive if your spouse/loved one is surprised and hurt by how well you've done
- Your soldier may be exhausted. Be flexible!

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Renegotiations & Reintegration



- Reality hits!
- A changed, more independent family.
- Anger, disappointment and guilt?
- Change in family dynamics
- Strategy: Communicate, Refocus, Reorganize



Be Sensitive To Changes In Your Loved Ones



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Steer Clear of Immediately Making Urgent Pressurized Decisions if Possible



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Post-Deployment Emotions



Soldier's Emotions:

- Will my family still need me?
- Will my kids recognize me?
- How did things go while I was gone?
- Will everyone be happy to see me?



Post-Deployment Emotions



Spouse's Emotions:

- How much has my spouse changed?
- Have I made good financial decisions?
- Did I do okay with the kids?
- Does he feel the same about me?



Expect Some Depression After Honey-moon phase



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Homecoming Letdown



- **Unrealistic Expectation**
- **Pre-Deployment Problems Remain**
- **Depression**
 - Two weeks or longer is serious
 - Aware of suicidal risk
 - Seek counseling, see chaplain
- **Drug or Alcohol Abuse**
- **Domestic Violence**
- **Anxiety or Panic; Nightmares**



Tips for Returning Soldiers

(1 of 2)



- **Make homecoming a special event....but**
 - Don't pack six month of fun into one weekend
 - Too many activities increases stress level
- **Express gratitude to significant others**
- **Don't Play Monday Morning Quarterback**



Tips for Returning Soldiers

(2 of 2)



- **Give family time to having you around again**
- **Go slowly on disciplinary issues**
- **Save knock-down drag-out issues for later**
- **No problems are too big to solve....**
-only people too small to solve them

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Tips for Spouses

- **Allow the soldier to have his space**
 - May not be used to all the activity at home
 - Not used to children
- **Don't press for decisions**
- **Be patient**
 - Remember he has been used to functioning in a military environment not a family environment
 - Allow him to "find his place" in the family



Keep Channels of Communication Opened



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Sources of Help



- Chaplains
- Family Support Groups
- Red Cross
- Army Community Services (ACS)
- Mental Health



Remember, Reunion Is A Process, Not An Event



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QUESTIONS !!!

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